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Introduction

■ Anders Buch¹

In this issue, we present four articles that illuminate working life in the Nordic countries. These articles span a diverse area of work practices and accentuate different aspects of regulative mechanisms and policies that structure the unfolding of contemporary work in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark. The research examines the minute and subtle practices and narratives of human resource experts in Sweden that are active in organizational recruitment processes, and it explores pension schemes in Norwegian companies. In the articles, we learn about the temporary liminal spaces of professionals in Finland, and we get a review of the literature on employer strategies for preventing mental health related work disabilities.

The first article, ‘The Challenge of Recruiting Underrepresented Groups – Exploring Organizational Recruitment Practices in Sweden’, by Ali Osman and Camilla Thunborg examines the narratives of 10 human resource professionals in Sweden. It explores organizational recruitment practices, and how these practices help to frame and organize the recruitment of underrepresented groups, and it teases out the inherent dilemmas of the practices and rationalities. The study identifies four recruitment practices: an informal, a pragmatic, a standardized, and a strategic recruitment practice. Interestingly, these practices construct inherent paradoxes between enhancing diversity and counteracting discrimination in the companies. This troublesome conclusion calls for new recruitment methods and perspectives that include issues in relation to diversity management and organizational culture more broadly.

In ‘a Temporary Liminal Space Counteracting the Permanent “in between” in Working Life’, Hanne Versala and Seppo Tuomivaara discuss the phenomenon of ambiguous liminality, that is, the permanent and temporary ‘in between’ that is experienced in contemporary working life. The authors provide a literature review on the role of ‘liminality’ in modernity, and advance the discussion further through an empirical analysis of the experiences of three Finnish professionals, as they changed their work environment to an unfamiliar rural Finnish archipelago for a short period of time. The authors describe how the change of work environment provides a temporary liminal space that helps illuminate ambiguous aspects of the everyday work practices and makes the involved professionals reflect on their career.

In her article, Tove Midtsundstad asks the question ‘Which Norwegian enterprises offer the poorest and which the best pension entitlements?’ She maps the current coverage of different occupational pension schemes and contractual pensions in the private sector in Norway and outline what characterizes enterprises that offer the best pensions. She finds that a high degree of unionization and local tariff agreements have no direct bearing on the contribution level, though companies that have strong social partner relations generally offer better pensions. Furthermore, companies whose main market is international

¹ You can find this text and its DOI at <https://tidsskrift.dk/njwls/index>.



seem to offer better occupational pension conditions than do companies whose market is primarily Norwegian or Nordic.

The last article, ‘Employer strategies for preventing mental health-related work disability: A scoping review’, coauthored by Ulrik Gensby, Hans Jørgen Limborg, Quenby Mahood, Christian Ståhl, and Karen Albertsen, explores the literature on employer strategies for preventing work disability in common mental disorders in the Nordic countries. The authors find a general consensus in the literature that a comprehensive approach to common metal disorders needs to include the assessment of the causes to sick leave, individual support, relevant changes in job task, and relevant involvement of managers, coworkers, and external stakeholders. But no studies actually adopt this comprehensive focus and document how efforts to combine various workplace interventions succeed. The authors furthermore offer suggestions for decision-makers and practitioners and urge them to adopt a more comprehensive multi-stakeholder support approach in their efforts to prevent common metal disorders.